

Subject: Comment on Draft 2006-08 STIP - Huffman/Birch in Anchorage

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To: DOT_STIP@dot.state.ak.us

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STIP Representative:

I am interested in improvements to a section of state roads in Anchorage that has deteriorated significantly. My comment is basically that Huffman Road needs to be upgraded from Elmore to Birch, then continuing north Birch Road needs to be upgraded from Huffman to O'Malley. The reasons are circulation, capacity, and safety. The problems are:

1. These roads are fairly well traveled at present. However, there is now a 60+ home subdivision planned for the corner of Huffman and Birch, which will significantly increase the number of trips originating in this area. We have had a number of collisions and close encounters between vehicles, pedestrians, and moose, and the increase in traffic will surely increase the accident rate.
2. These roads have ridiculous frost heaves in the winter (maybe the worst in Anchorage) that not only are safety problems but they also greatly reduce the capacity of the roads. My kids have hit their heads on the ceiling of the school bus on this stretch due to frost heaves and I have heard reports of kids on buses getting jostled so much that they get cuts from slamming into the plastic seats. Both Huffman and Birch need to be reconstructed to smooth out the frost heaves.
3. There are no shoulders on these roads and when breakdowns or ditch diving occurs (particularly on the hill on Huffman) it becomes a very dangerous stretch of road.
4. There is no decent place to walk or ride a bike on the Huffman section yet every day I see many people walking and riding on the shoulderless road. This is very dangerous as vehicles frequently blast through this area at speeds in excess of the posted 45 mph. Kids walking to bus stops walk right along the road in the dark, which is a big safety concern even for those driving within the speed limit. A separated pedestrian trail/bike path is really needed along Huffman from Elmore to Birch. This is one of the unconnected sections of bike paths that gets little attention. I think the level of traffic (vehicular as well as bikes/pedestrians/skiers) justifies a connection.
5. These stretches of road are high moose density areas. However, the ROW clearance is narrow and moose often pop out of the woods with no reaction time for drivers. I cannot count how many times I have just missed hitting a moose along the Huffman section. We need greater sight distances.

Please let me know if there is anything that can be done to get reconstruction and upgrade of Huffman/Birch into the State Transportation Improvement Program. If this is not the correct mechanism to request schedule improvements, please advise me as to the proper process.

Thanks,

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